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OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT OF TESTIMONY FOR THE DEFENSE OF ORGANIZATIONS, TAKEN BEFORE A COMMISSION APPOINTED BY THE INTERNATIONAL MILITARY TRIBUNAL PURSUANT TO PARAGRAPH 4 OF THE ORDER OF THE TRIBUNAL DATED 13 MARCH 1946.

10 June 1946

COMMISSIONERS:

Captain Joseph Tubridy
Mr. Rasumov

THE SS

(The Commission convened at 1000 hours.)

RUEDIGER a witness, WILHELM /VON WOIKOWSKY-BIDEAU/ took the stand and testified as follows:

CAPTAIN TUBRIDY:

Q Will you raise your right hand and repeat this oath after me:

I swear by God, the Almighty and Omniscient, that I will speak the pure truth and will withhold and add nothing.

(The witness repeated the oath.)

Q What is your name:

Ruediger
Wilhelm /von Woikowsky-Biedeau.

CAPTAIN TUBRIDY: You may sit down.

DR. HAENSEL: The theme of my questioning today will concern the transfer of Riding Groups into the SS, composition, goal, training, political training and sports activities of the SS Riders in relation to the Army and the Police, membership of prominent democrats in the SS and was the SS Riders used during the Roehm Putsch or the Jewish Pogroms.

H0933 - 0003

BY DR. HAENSEL:

Q How old are you?

A 58 years of age.

Q Did you belong to a riding unit?

A Yes.

Q When and where?

A In 1927 I entered a riding organization in Schöbekirch/Neumarkt.

Q What happened to that group in 1933?

A In the fall of 1933 the riding organization in Schöbekirch/Neumarkt received an order from the provincial director to transfer either into a SA or SS organization.

Q Did other riding organizations which were composed just like yours receive similar orders?

A As far as I know all rural riding organizations received such orders.

Q You stated that you had to join either the SS or the SA. How was that done?

A After a conversation between the Oberlandstallmeister Rau and Staatssekretär Grauert it was decided that the main breeding areas would be divided and join the SS while all the other riding units would join the SA.

Q Were any political reasons or differences behind the decision whether to be transferred into the SS or SA?

A No.

Q Were all the members of your riding organization taken into the SS or was there a selection made according to political views?

A My riding organization was taken over as a unit.

H0933-0004

Q With the other riding organizations, was it the same or was it different?

A I cannot give complete information about all the riding organizations. I know that the 9th Reiterstandarte, composed of riding organizations from Clobbenburg, Fechtar, Bremen, Oldenburg/Land and Jever, were taken over as a whole, that is as a group.

Q Did you, as SS Reiter Sturm, have your own horses?

A I know for instance that the riding organization in Silesia all had their own horses but in some parts of the Reich some Sturms had unit horses.

M. MONNERAY: Would it be possible to ask the witness as to what his own position was?

DR. HAENSEL: I will come to that immediately.

Q. Were these horses or the use of these horses prepared for the war?

A. No.

Q Did the riders in the SS Rider Unit or riding organization have any pre-military training at all.

A Pre-military training for the SS riding units was expressly prohibited.

Q There were so-called riding certificates. What were they and were they given to the SS?

A The riding certificate was something that was issued by the SA but not by the SS. These riding certificates issued by the SA were supposed to certify concerning the riding ability of the person to whom it was issued. It was supposed to give the person or the SA man, upon entering the Army, a chance that he would be used in a cavalry unit.

Q What rank did you have and what positions did you have during the course of the years?

H0933-0005

A In 1934 I was SS Anwaerter and it was my duty to unify the riding organizations that joined the SS into a Standarte. In the fall of 1934 I was advanced from SS Anwaerter to SS Obertruppfuehrer and upon my moving to Hamburg I was transferred to the Oberabschnitt or highest sector, Nordsee, and was there made adviser for the riding organization. In March 1935 I was made Untersturmfuehrer; in the fall of 1935 I was made Hauptsturmfuehrer; in the Fall of 1936 Sturmbannfuehrer; shortly before the Olympics I was made Adviser in the SS Hauptamt, or main office, for riding; in the fall of the same year I was made Obersturmbannfuehrer; in the summer of 1937 I was made Standartenfuehrer. I was the same until March 1938. After 1938 I was not used by the SS any more.

Q In other words, until 1938 you were in charge of the SS riding organization?

A There was no Chief of the SS riders but only an adviser in the SS Hauptamt or main office.

Q As such you saw the duties or goals of the SS Riders. Were they political or sport goals?

A The goals of the SS Riders were purely sport reasons.

Q Did you receive any orders to use sport activities for political propaganda?

A No.

Q How large were the SS Riding Groups altogether?

A Until the summer of 1938 about 20,000 men went through the SS riding units but the membership at one time was around 10,000.

Q Could one be a tournament rider without being a member of such an organization?

H0933 - 0006

A With the tournament riders one has to make the difference between professional and amateur riders. For an amateur rider it was impossible to take part in tournament riding; for professional riders it was possible for a few to take part in these tournaments.

Q In its organization was the SS riding units separated from the SS?

A In order to give the correct answer to this I might have to give you, more or less the table of organization of the riding organizations. In the SS Riding Units the highest organization was the Standarte. The Standarte were again divided into Stuerme; these Stuerme were divided into Zuege and then were divided down into Scharen. About every Oberabschnitt or main region was in charge of one SS Reiterstandarte. These SS Reiterstandarte, or organizations, were not under an SS foot organization. The orders were received through the SS Main Office. The duty of the adviser with the Oberabschnitt, or the main region, was to receive these orders from the main office and ~~them~~ give them to the Oberabschnittfurehrer, to receive his suggestions for changes.

Q In other words, that was the duty you had until 1938?

A Yes.

Q Were a lot of Party members in the SS Riding organizations or was it completely free whether or not a person was in the Party?

A Since these riding organizations were only activated in 1933-1934 there were no old Party Members and the number of Party Members that joined the Party later on was insignificant.

Q Were the SS Riding Units in the country organized mainly of men that were trained horsemen, that is farmers, farmers' sons, and owners?

A About 90 per cent of the riders in the SS riding organizations were

H0933 - 0007

country fellows, that is, especially farmers' sons, that had their own horses.

Q So besides the Reichs sport within the SS riding organizations, of which you already spoke, was a lot of political training given within these units?

A In 1933-1934, as far as I remember, there was no political teaching at all in the SS riding units. For 1935 the SS riding organization had only such political training as was in the Party pamphlets, which were public.

Q Did you also visit any foreign tournaments as the SS riding organization?

A Upon invitation SS riding groups participated in foreign tournaments.

Q Can you give me any examples?

A The SS riding organizations were invited to tournaments in Riga, Warsaw, Pardupitz, Bucharest and Rome.

Q Were there any famous riders in the SS riding organizations and were there any famous horses used by the SS riding organizations?

A The SS had within its membership a number of famous international riders, for instance: Axel Holst, Guenther Taemme, Heydenrich, von Salviati, von Barnekov, von Zastrow, Prince Christian von Hesse, Haerlin, List, Dr. Hohmann, Andreas, Lengnick. As for famous horses, I want to mention Nordland, Bianca, ~~Prince Bernard von Lippe~~ .....

MAJOR MURRAY: It seems to me entirely immaterial whether they had famous horses in this riding group. I think it is a waste of the commission's time.

DR. HAENSEL: I think we have had enough. It was just interesting as far as the sports activity was concerned.

Q You mentioned the name of Axel Holst before. He was a Swede, was he not?

H0933-0008

A Yes, Holst was a Swede.

Q He had joined the SS Riding Units?

A Yes.

Q All these names you mentioned - were they active National Socialists or were they just sportsmen?

A They were purely sportsmen.

Q Did you know Prince Bernard von Lippe, later the Prince Regent of Holland?

A Yes.

Q Can you certify to us that he belonged to the SS?

A Yes.

Q Did you hear that during his wedding an SS unit participated?

A At his wedding there was a small group of his own Riding Sturm in Berlin and also a few of his personal SS riding friends.

Q Did the SS riding units participate in any way during the Roehm Putsch?

A No. At that time most of the men in the SS belonged to different organizations, that is they were not yet active SS men.

Q Did the SS riding organization have anything to do with the concentration camps?

A No.

Q Was the SS riding unit used in any way for anti-Semitic riots or meetings, pogroms, and so on?

A No.

DR. HAENSEL: That is all.

H0933 - 0009

CROSS EXAMINATION

BY ~~X~~. COL. GRIFFITH-JONES:

Q I understood you to say that 90 percent of the members of the SS Riding Units were country people and that they had their own horses?

A Yes. They had their own horses.

Q When the SS took over the Riding Clubs in 1933, am I right in thinking that there was no kind of compulsion placed upon members of those riding clubs to join the SS?

A No, there was no pressure at all to join the SS, but the riding organizations, as such, had the order to join either the SS or the SA.

Q So that if somebody had refused or had resigned from the riding club when it was taken over by the SS there was nothing to prevent his doing so?

A He had to finish or he could no longer participate in any sports activity.

Q Apart from the sports activities run by the riding club he had no other loss?

A No, he had no loss other than he had to give up his hobby.

Q Apart from the 10 per cent who did not own their own horses, resignation would not even have meant that they would thereafter be unable to ride?

A I do not understand the question.

Q Perhaps I could make my question a little clearer. If the 90 per cent that owned their own horses had resigned they could still have gone on riding their own horses?

A If these 90 percent from the rural areas had not belonged to the SS riding organizations they could not have particpated in tournaments.

H0933 - 0010

COLONEL GRIFFITH-JONES: No other questions.

CAPTAIN TUBRIDY: Are we finished with this witness now?

DR. HAENSEL: I have no further questions.

CAPTAIN TUBRIDY: The witness may retire.

The commission adjourned at 11 00

The foregoing is a true and correct transcript of the testimony of WILHELM VON WOIKOWSKY-BIDEAU, taken on 10 June 1946.

Mabel A. Lesser
Reporter 1-9

Reporter

CERTIFIED TO:

Joseph Tubridy
Commissioner

Commissioner

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10 June 1946

COMMISSIONERS:

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THE SS

(The Commission convened at 1000 hours.)

WILHELM RUEDIGER VON WOIKOWSKY-BIDEAU, a witness, took the stand and testified as follows:

CAPTAIN TUBRIDY:

Q Will you raise your right hand and repeat this oath after me:

I swear by God, the Almighty and Omniscient, that I will speak the pure truth and will withhold and add nothing.

(The witness repeated the oath.)

Q What is your name:

Wilhelm Ruediger von Woikowsky-Biedeau.

CAPTAIN TUBRIDY: You may sit down.

DR. HAENSEL: The theme of my questioning today will concern the transfer of Riding Groups into the SS, composition, goal, training, political training and sports activities of the SS Riders in relation to the Army and the Police, membership of prominent democrats in the SS and what the SS Riders used during the Roehm Putsch or the Jewish Pogroms.

BY DR. HAENSEL:

Q How old are you?

A 58 years of age.

Q Did you belong to a riding unit?

A Yes.

Q When and where?

A In 1937 I entered a riding organization in Schöbekirch/Neumarkt.

Q What happened to that group in 1933?

A In the fall of 1933 the riding organization in Schöbekirch/Neumarkt received an order from the provincial director to transfer either into a SA or SS organization.

H0933-0011

Q Did other riding organizations which were composed just like yours receive similar orders?

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A After a conversation between the Oberlandstallmeister Rau and Staatssekretär Grauert it was decided that the main breeding areas would be divided and join the SS while all the other riding units would join the SA

Q Were any political reasons or differences behind the decision whether to be transferred into the SS or SA?

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DR. HAENSEL: I will come tothat immediately.

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A Pre-military training for the SS riding units was expressly prohibited.

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H0933 - 0013

A The riding certificate was something that was issued by the SA but not by the SS. These riding certificates issued by the SA were supposed to certify concerning the riding ability of the person to whom it was issued. It was supposed to give the person or the SA man, upon entering the Army, a chance that he would be used in a cavalry unit.

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H0933 - 0014

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A In order to give the correct answer to this I might have to give you, more or less the table of organization of the riding organizations. In the SS Riding Units the highest organization was the Standarte. The Standarte

H0933-0015

were again divided into Stuerme; these Stuerme were divided into Zuege and then were divided down into Scharen. About every Oberabschnitt or main region was in charge of one SS Reiterstandarte. These SS Reiterstandarte, or organizations were not under an SS foot organization. The orders were received through the SS Main Office. The duty of the adviser with the Oberabschnitt, or the main region, was to receive these orders from the main office and give them to the Oberabschnittfuehrer, to receive his suggestions for changes.

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Q Did you also visit any foreign tournaments as the SS riding organization?

A Upon invitation SS riding groups participated in foreign tournaments.

Q Can you give me any examples?

A The SS riding organizations were invited to tournaments in Riga, Warsaw, Leipzig, Bucharest and Rom .

Q Were there any famous riders in the SS riding organizations or were there any famous horses used by the SS riding organizations?

H0933-0016

A The SS had within its membership a number of famous international riders, for instance: Axel Holst, Guenther Taemme, Heydenrich, von Salviati, von Barkenov, von Zastrow, Prince Christian von Hesse, Haerlin, List, Dr. Lehmann, Andreas, Lengnick. As for famous horses, I want to mention Nordland, Bianca ....

MAJOR MURRAY: It seems to me entirely immaterial whether they had famous horses in this riding group. I think it is a waste of the commission's time.

DR. HAENSEL: I think we have had enough. It was just interesting as far as sports activity was concerned.

Q You mentioned the name of Axel Holst before. He was a Swede, was he not?

H0933-0017

A Yes, Holst was a Swede.

Q He had joined the SS Riding Units?

A Yes.

Q All these names you mentioned - were they active National Socialists or were they just sportsmen?

A They were purely sportsmen.

Q Did you know Prince Bernard von Lippe, later the Prince Regent of Holland?

A Yes.

Q Can you certify to us that he belonged to the SS?

A Yes.

Q Did you hear that during his wedding an SS unit participated?

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A No. At that time most of the men in the SS belonged to different organizations, that is they were not yet active SS men.

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A No.

DR. HEENSEL: That is all.

CROSS EXAMINATION

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Q I understood you to say that 90 percent of the members of the SS Riding Units were country people and that they had their own horses?

A Yes. They had their own horses.

Q When the SS took over the Riding Clubs in 1933, am I right in thinking that there was no kind of compulsion placed upon members of those riding clubs to join the SS?

A No, there was no pressure at all to join the SS, but the riding

H0933-0018

organizations, as such, had the order to join either the SS or the SA.

Q So that if somebody had refused or had resigned from the riding club when it was taken over by the SS there was nothing to prevent his doing so?

A He had to finish or he could no longer participate in any sports activity.

Q Apart from the sports activities run by the riding club he had no other loss?

A No, he had no loss other than he had to give up his hobby.

Q Apart from the 10 per cent who did not own their own horses, resignation would not even have meant that they would thereafter be unable to ride?

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A If these 90 percent from the rural areas had not belonged to the SS riding organizations they could not have participated in tournaments.

COLONEL GRIFFITH-JONES: No other questions.

CAPTAIN TUBRIDY: Are we finished with this witness now?

DR. HAENSEL: I have no further questions.

CAPTAIN TUBRIDY: The witness may retire.

(The Commission adjourned at 1100 hours)

The foregoing is a true and correct transcript of the testimony of WILHELM VON WOIKOWSKY-BIDERN, taken on 10 June 1946.

MABEL A. LESSER
Reporter

CERTIFIED TO:

JOSEPH F. TUBRIDY
Commissioner